

Malawi: Human rights body seeks court protection from MBC



By [Gregory Gondwe](#)

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The Human Rights Consultative Committee (HRCC), an umbrella of over 90 civil society organisations, has sought court protection from the state-controlled broadcaster, the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), which is said to be attacking the body and its chairperson, Undule Mwakasungula.



On Thursday, 31 March 2011, the human rights body and Mwakasungula applied for an injunction at the Lilongwe High Court restraining MBC from airing 'defamatory' statements against the institution and its leadership.

Judge Justice Richard Chinangwa court has however set this coming Thursday, 7 April 2011, for an interparte hearing before he could allow for the injunction.

There is also an injunction restraining the MBC from broadcasting any news material on the state VP Joyce Banda who complained that the broadcaster was vilifying and attacking her without bothering to seek her side of story. MBC is currently in court challenging the injunction.

Suing MBC for defamation of character

Lawyer for the body Zelos Matumba told a local daily that he will also be suing MBC for defamation of character for the HRCC leader. The HRCC said since the first week of March 2011, government rolled out a castigating exercise towards the leadership of HRCC, especially the chairperson, and it has cited seventeen such instances that took place between 5-26 March.

On 5 March the body says MBC TV featured a certain church official during the news who went home condemning the civil society for continuing with plans of demonstrating instead of giving dialogue a chance. The following day on 6 March MBC

TV and Radio 1 covered a political rally of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party - DPP at Kamuzu Stadium in Blantyre President Bingu wa Mutharika commanding the DPP zealots to install discipline in civil society leaders who continue condemning his government.

The HRCC has been subjected to government anger after it condemned the passing of a media repressive law and other pieces of legislation deemed to be in violation of the rights of the people.

Myriad of attacks on the HRCC and Mwakasungula

Government spokesperson, who is also minister of information and civic education, Symon Vuwa Kaunda as well as presidential spokesperson Hetherwick Ntaba have launched a myriad of attacks on the HRCC and Mwakasungula who is also the executive director of the Centre for Human Rights Rehabilitation (CHRR).

"If people can get thin because of being criticised in public, then Undule Mwakasungula would have been a mere needle or piece of paper by now," writes a satirical columnist for *Weekend Nation* Edward Chitsulo over the matter.

"We have all seen how Mwakasungula ... has been personally attacked on public airwaves," further observed Chitsulo who is managing editor for the Nation Publications Limited.

ABOUT GREGORY GONDWE

Gregory Gondwe is a Malawian journalist who started writing in 1993. He is also a media consultant assisting several international journalists pursuing assignments in Malawi. He holds a Diploma and an Intermediate Certificate in Journalism among other media-related certificates. He can be contacted on gregorygondwe@gmail.com. Follow him on Twitter at @Kalipochi.

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